



I NO 61

*The EMPEROR with his
Beautiful QUEEN.*

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
SEVEN WISE MASTERS,
OF
ROME.

CONTAINING,
Many Excellent and Delightful
Examples.

WITH

Their Explanations and Modern Signifi-
cations; which (by way of Allusion)
may be termed, An Historical Com-
parison of sacred and civil Transactions;
the better to make an Impression on the
Minds of Men.

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T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F T H E
Seven Wise Masters, of Rome.

C H A P. I

TH E R E reigned in the city of Rome, a famous Emperor, whose wife excelled in virtue all the rest of her sex; he had by this wife one son named Dioclesian. The Emperor assembled his nobles to advise how he might train his son up; whose opinions were, That he should send for the Seven Wise Masters. The young Prince thus disposed of, his mother the Queen soon afterwards died, and the Emperor having lived single for some time, the Roman Lords besought him to take a second wife. At this all the courts in Europe were searched for an accomplished lady; at length they pitched on the king of Castile's daughter, of whom the emperor much approved:

the marriage being concluded, she came to Rome, and then with pomp the nuptials were celebrated.—The young empress having no child, studied how she might destroy the young Prince; and the better to do it, prevailed with her lord to send him to court. But the hasty and unexpected message caused the masters to expect some evil; they consulted the planets and found, that if the prince went at that time and spake at all, he would die a violent death; and yet if he went not, they should lose their heads which they would rather do than hazard his life. Whilst they were in this anxiety the prince came down, and demanded the cause of their trouble? The which they related, with their resolution—With that he viewed the firmament and found the constellations more propitious, for it now appeared, that if he refrained from speaking seven days, he should escape the death threatened, desiring his masters to intercede in his favour and make an apology to the emperor.

for his not speaking for such a time, and withal told them a dream that he had dreamed, viz. That his bed-chamber seemed to be turned upside down. From which they presaged good success, promising to do their utmost for his preservation, and thereupon set him upon a stately horse, cloathed in green and gold, and attended him to his father's court. The emperor came forth and embraced him, enquiring his welfare; to which the prince gave no answer; whereat the emperor marvelled, yet thought it was so ordered by the masters; he conducted him to the palace, and seated him next the throne; interrogating many things, but none answered. While the emperor's thoughts were taken up in wondering at his son's silence, the empress came in adorned with costly robes, and understanding which was her son-in-law, received him with much seeming kindness, and taking him aside by the emperor's consent, she undertook to make him speak.

The' with intent his virtue to betray,
That to his life she might make easy way.

CHAP. II.

The Empress's wicked Scheme.

THE empress, fired with the beauty of the young prince, sought many means to entice him to a rich alcove, telling him that she should die and leave her royalty if he denied her love. This he refused, tho' in silence; whereupon she brought him pen, ink, and paper, desiring him to write a reply, which he did to this effect: madam, the laws of my Creator forbid so great a wickedness, as to defile my father's bed; fatal, madam, would be the consequence, both from avenging heaven and my father's wrath, therefore, on my knees I implore you would proceed no further. Hereupon he fell on his knees. The empress seeing this, turned her love to hatred, tearing her face and robes in a most wretched manner, crying out for help. At this alarm the emperor came and demanded the cause,

when she declared, that the prince would have been rude with her and forced her to lawless lust. The emperor then commanded he should be put to death immediately, upon which the nobles fell on their knees before their Lord, and begged a respite for his execution ; to which the emperor agreed, which pleased all but the empress.

CHAP. III.

Pantillus, the first Master's Intercession.

THE empress grieving at the delay of the son's execution, told the emperor the following example, saying, if his son lived, it would fare with him as with a Roman nobleman, who had in his orchard a fair tree bearing fruit, but one day he saw springing from the root thereof a young scion ; at which he rejoiced, saying that that would be a fair tree ; but finding it increased not in growth asked the gardener the reason, who answered, that the large branches of

the old tree kept the sun and falling showers from it ; whereupon he caused many to be cut off, yet finding the body of the old tree impaired the nourishment of the young scien, he caused that to be hewn down ; which done, the young scien withered. Even so, said she, is your case ; you are the tree, and your son the scien, that is inviting your subjects to rise against your life that he may reign. That shall not be, said the emperor, for to-morrow he shall surely die.

The fatal day being arrived, the prince was delivered to the executioner, which Pantillus, the first master, hearing, hastened to the palace, and laid before the emperor the following example :

There once lived a knight in this city, who had a son, whom leaving to the care of some nurses, he often went abroad, delighting in hawking and hunting ; among his dogs he had a greyhound : One day going a tournament he left his hawk and falcon at home, at which time the cradle in

which the son lay was standing in the hall, and the nurses leaving it, the greyhound slept by it; the falcon espied a serpent coming out of a hole in the wall, and making towards the child, upon which shaking and fluttering his bells, he awaked the greyhound, who killed the serpent, and saved the child, yet in the bustle the cradle was overturned, and the child was whelmed under it, the greyhound lying down by it, and licking his wounds; which the servants seeing, ran and told the lady the news, who with them, concluded the hound had devoured her son, whereupon the father struck off the hound's head; but afterwards finding his mistake, was vexed that he had credited his wife. Even so, said the master, it will happen unto you. Then said the emperor, he shall not die.

CHAP. IV.

The Second Master's Intercession.

THE emperors hearing that the master had prevailed with the

emperor, came and besought him
 that the son might be put to death,
 least it happen to him as to a wild
 boar thus—There was a mighty em-
 peror, whose kingdom was wasted by
 a boar, which obliged the emperor to
 proclaim, that whosoever killed him,
 should have his daughter in marriage,
 and after his decease, the empire.
 Many attempted, but in vain, till a
 shepherd with only a staff, resolved to
 venture on him, but beholding his
 tusks, &c. was afraid to touch him,
 therefore he took to a tree, on which
 grew delicious fruit ; but the boar
 shaking it so, he was fearful of its
 falling, therefore threw down the fruit
 thereof, which so satisfied the boar,
 that he lay down to sleep ; in the
 interim the shepherd descended, and
 stuck the beast to the heart, and so
 won what the emperor had promised.
 Consider then, my lord, the case is
 just your's; you are the mighty boar,
 against which open force cannot pre-
 vail; but secret fraud may deceive
 you of your life and empire, whilst

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you harken to the masters. Then
said the emperor, he shall die.

The second master, named Lent-
ullus, on hearing that the empress
had again prevailed, came before the
emperor, entreating him to spare his
son's life, lest it happen to him as it
did to a Roman knight that espoused
a beautiful wife, and fearing she
should stray, locked the doors every
night, laying the key under his head,
but she stole it from thence, and
went and sported with her gallant;
but one night missing her, he bolted
the door; she returned and knocked,
but he upbraided her for her incon-
stancy, saying, she should stay till
the watch seized her; whereupon
she took two large stones, and threw
them into a well that was in the court
yard, then hid herself close under
the door; at which, the knight think-
ing she had jumped into the well,
came down to relieve her; then upon
his opening the door, she went in and
bolted him out, calling for the watch
to seize him, who being carried before

a magistrate he adjudged him to stand in the pillory. This story so moved the emperor, that, says he, This day my son shall not die.

C H A P. V.

Cralon, the third Master's Intercession

THE empress became exceedingly outrageous, and the emperor finding nothing would allay her fury, promised her his son's death once more. There lived, said she, a knight at Rome who spent great riches, and was reduced to poverty, so that he was about to sell his inheritance; but his son and two daughters urged to the contrary; whereupon he resolved with his son to break into the emperor's treasury, and took from thence as much gold as both could carry; they attempted it again a second time; the father went first, and was caught in a trap, and told his son to strike off his head, lest being discovered, his family should die. The son accordingly complied, and bore away the head; but the body next morning

being found, was by the emperor's order, dragged about the city with command that wherever they heard any weeping as the body passed by, to enter the house and convey those therein to the gallows, for of that house was he lord; when the body came near the knight's house, the daughter shrieked, when to prevent the discovery the son wounded himself, and insinuated that that was the cause; the officers were satisfied, and carried the body to the place of execution and hanged it up; yet the son would neither take it down nor bury the head, though the father died to save his life. Even so, said she, is your case by your son, who seeks your life and my honour. That shall not be, for to-morrow he shall die,

When she had told her story, Cra-
loa, the third master, came in, say-
ing, dread sovereign, if your son dieth
it will happen to you as with a
knight who killed a pye that he
exceedingly loved, thus: An em-
peror, married a wife, who took many

unlawful pleasures which being perceived by the pye, whom the knight had taught most languages, he told his master what had happened in his absence, for which the lady hated him, and to prevent it for the future she untiled the house, and cast down sand, stones, and water upon him, which the pye took for hail, rain, and snow; so when his lord came home, he told him he was almost killed, by reason of the heavy tempest that fell upon him the wife hearing him say so answered, My lord, you may now see your error in crediting this bird, for there has not been a fairer day in the memory of man. The knight upon this enquired of his neighbours, who confirmed what she said, He therefore broke the neck of the pye; but after the deed, he saw the house untiled with the gravel, &c. standing on the top of the house, which persuaded him the pye had been deceived. Deceived indeed! said the emperor, and for the example's sake, my son shall not die this day.

The empress finding this, answered

my lord, in this city reigned an emperor named Tiberius, who had seven counsellors, who being skilled in magic so ordered by their charms, that the emperor's eyes had a continual mist before them; but the empress sitting at the table with her lord, comforted him in the best wife; desiring to command his chief counsellors on pain of death to restore him to sight. The emperor then sent for the magic counsellors, and charged them to tell the reason of his blindness, and a cure; after long puzzeling they found a youth who interpreted a dream of a spring, which rising small, soon overflowed the ground, and the man accordingly digging found great treasure, as the youth had interpreted; they desired him to go with them, and he should be well rewarded. Coming before the emperor, he desired to be let into the royal bed-chamber, where casting off the bed-clothes, there appeared a seeming well, fed with seven springs, which the youth said must be stopped, ere he

could have his sight in another place. Then demanded he, how must they be stopped? To which the youth answered, The seven springs signified his seven counsellors, who had usurped his royal authority, casting a mist of delusion before his eyes, that he might not behold their extortion; therefore strike off their heads, said he, and the springs shall cease. To this he consented, the springs vanished, and his sight was restored. Just so, said she, it is with you and your seven masters. On this he again consented, his son should die.

C H A P. VI.

Malquidrake, the fourth Master's Intercession.

K Now, great Sir, said Malquidrake to him, That there formerly lived in this city, an old knight who married a young lady, who complained to her mother that she was unhappay in the marriage of this old man, designing to open her case to some priest. From this, her mother persuaded her, urging her to try his

temper. The means she used were to cut down the best plant in the garden and make a fire under it; another time she dashed out the brains of his favourite hound; and lastly, when he and his friends were sitting at dinner, to throw all the dishes from off the table. Yet with her excuses he seemed satisfied, and that morning she intended to go to the priest, he brought a surgeon into the chamber, and commanding her to rise and be blooded; whereat she began to entreat, but, said he, your mad blood must be let out, and if you refuse that, I will have your heart's blood. Upon this, she permitted him to bleed her in both arms, till she fainted away. But reviving, she sent for her mother, and told her this usage. The mother being glad of this correction, said, that old men's revenge was sure though slow; asking her how she liked the Priest? The devil take the priest, said she. I'll strive now to please none but my husband. The emperor hearing this, sent to spare his son. The empress understanding it,

name and said, My Lord, over this
 city once ruled Octavianus, who being
 troubled with the rebellion of his sub-
 jects, ordered his magicians to devise
 a way how he might know at any
 time the state of the provinces; upon
 which Virgillus, the most crafty of
 them, raised a tower, situated in it as
 many images as provinces, and in the
 hands of each a bell, which by a
 secret instinct or magic rung out if any
 revolt happened in the province it was
 assigned guardian of, so that the
 citizens instantly arriving, suppressed
 the foes, ere they could make head,
 which being known to the tributary
 nations desirous to cast off the Roman
 yoke, they contrived to destroy the
 tower, which after a long debate was
 undertaken by four knights, who
 bringing great treasure hid it in four
 places near the walls of the city, and
 entering in, pretended to be sooth-
 sayers, and could discover some hid-
 den treasure; which being known to
 the emperor, he sent for them, who
 pretending to dream, discovered the
 treasure they had hid; at last they

this pretended to dream that under the
 tower lay a great treasure, and if the
 emperor would permit they would
 take it out; to which he consented;
 whereupon they undermined the
 tower, and at break of day left the
 city, but were out of sight before it
 fell. At which the citizens being
 grieved, came to the emperor, and
 acquainted him with it; and under-
 standing that through his covetousness
 the mischief befel them, they carried
 him to the market place, and poured
 melted gold down his throat, and bu-
 ried him. The enemy soon after
 came upon the town, and took it,
 destroyed the inhabitants, and took
 all their riches. The empress then
 demanded if he knew the meaning?
 Who replied in the negative. Well,
 then said she, the tower with the
 images signify your body, with its
 intellectual faculties, as long as they
 remain strong, and on good founda-
 tion, you are safe, but if you give
 yourself up to the flattery of the
 masters, you must expect to fall.
 Rather than so, said he, they shall
 perish with my son.

Josephus the Fifth Master's Intercession.

DRead sir, may I beg your attention to the following example? Ipocras, a famous physician, took to assist him his cousin Gallenius, who soon became more expert than he, whereat he endeavoured to hide from him his art, though in vain, for his ready wit supplied other defects. So that sending him to visit great persons in their sickness, always cured them; which created such jealousy in Ipocras, that he killed and buried him. But he falling sick, ordered his scholars to fill a cask of water, which they did, and though an hundred holes were bored in it, yet none would issue thence; whereupon he said he was a dead man; for as no water issued out of the cask, so no virtues came out of the herbs to cure his disease, but if his cousin had been alive, he could have cured him. Thus complaining he died. For this example, said the emperor, my son shall not die.

The empress hearing of this re-
 prieve, came and said, Great sir, when
 the king of Goths invaded Rome, he
 had a steward named Coadus ; when
 one evening being merry with wine,
 he ordered him to bring him a beau-
 teous woman, and she should have
 a great reward ; whereupon the stew-
 ard compelled his wife to lie with the
 king, bargaining for a thousand pieces
 of silver, and the lady to depart ere
 morning. To this the king consent-
 ing, she was brought, and the king
 enjoyed her ; when before day the
 husband came, and entreated his
 lord to dismiss her ; but the king re-
 fused, saying, she pleased him so well
 that she should sleep with him long-
 er, whereat he being much disturbed,
 told him she was his wife, and that
 for lucre he had forced her to his
 arms. At which the king, moved to
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 death, which he did, and the king
 maintained his wife as his own. For
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Cleophas the sixth Masters Intercession

Cleophas came and said, There lived in this city a knight, who married a very beautiful lady, whose voice was so charming, that she ravished the hearers. One day as she sat singing with her casement open, three favourite knights of the emperor passed by, who were all much taken with her voice and person, they each took convenient times to come to her, without acquainting one another, to treat with her about enjoyment, to which she seemingly consented, in consideration (as she was but poor) they brought a hundred florins a piece; so desired them to come singly at different times, and she would receive them; which done she acquainted her husband, advising him to stand with his sword drawn, and as they entered to kill them, which he performed; and taking away their money, threw the bodies into the sea. Soon after the knight and his lady quarrelled, and he striking her, she cried out, in the hearing of many, O

thou monster ! will you kill me as you did the three knights ? Now the knights being missed, caused a suspicion ; on which they were both seized, confessed the fact, and were afterwards executed. Then, said the emperor, my son shall not die.

Upon this the empress came, and said, My lord, in Armenia reigned a king, who had a beautiful wife, on whom he doated ; and because others should not enjoy her, confined her in a castle, and kept the keys himself. The queen after four days confinement dreamt she saw a knight that was enamoured with her, and she no less with him. Now there was a knight who had heard of her beauty, and left his country to see her ; but finding she was confined, rode about the castle, hoping she might look out of the window, and he find means to discover his passion. Not long did his expectations fail, for the lady beholding him concluded he was the man she beheld in her dream ; and as he daily frequented the place, she

took an opportunity to drop a letter, which he took up and departed, consulting with himself how he might answer her expectations, and which he determined thus: That he would insinuate himself into the king's favour, which he did by his great wisdom in state affairs, insomach that the king made him steward of his household, and accordingly ordered a house to be built adjoining to the castle for him, thro' the building of which the knight contrived to cut the wall, and to make a private way into the castle; and then for secrecy slew the workmen. On his entering, he was joyfully received by the queen, who permitted him to take his fill of love, giving him the ring the king gave her on the wedding day; which the king noted as he slept in his presence. He perceiving the discovery, feigned sick, and obtained licence to retire, conveying the ring to her again, ere the king came to enquire for it; nay, he often brought her to the king's table, pretending she was a lady of his acquaintance, whom he intended

shortly to wed. The king earnestly
 looking, said, Well, if I had not the
 keys of the castle, I should almost
 swear it was my queen; and before
 he could go to prove it, she was re-
 turned, and in her usual dress. In
 the end the knight desired the king
 to give him this lady in marriage,
 which he did, giving him great riches
 with a ship to convey them to Greece,
 where the knight had large possessions
 and solemnly taking leave, they set
 sail; at which time the king let his
 eyes after them till they were out of
 sight, and afterwards went to divert
 himself with the queen, but coming
 into the castle, found she was fled.
 He suspecting the scheme fell into
 great lamentations. Even so, said
 she will it befall you, if you thus
 credit your masters. To prevent the
 like, said the emperor, they with my
 son to-morrow shall die.

 C H A P X.

*Diocles the seventh Masters Inter-
cession.*

THE seventh Master named Dio-
 cles, came and said, Know

fir, That in Ephesus lived a knight,
 who married a lady, upon whom he
 doated, that he could not endure her
 out of his sight; but playing at chess,
 and he holding a penknife in his hand,
 she hit her finger against it, which
 the knight seeing fell into a swoon,
 and gave up the ghost; whereupon
 she stood mourning by his tomb. So
 her friends built her a house nigh to
 mourn in. Now when a malefactor
 was to be hanged, it was the law of
 the country that the sheriff was to
 watch him on the gallows the ensuing
 night. The sheriff discovering a
 light in the house of the above widow
 came thither to warm himself, and
 returning found the thief stolen;
 whereat he concluded to go back to
 the widow, and there bewail his mis-
 fortune, and desire herto put him in
 a way what to do. Upon this, she
 pausing, told him, that at the price of
 his love, she would put him in a way
 what to do, which was this. A few
 days ago, says she, my lord was buri-
 ed, take and hang him up instead of
 the thief: But, said the sheriff, the

thief had lost his ears, teeth, and stones, as likewise in being taken received a wound in his head. It is in your power to serve my lord so, said she. Nay, said he, not I. Then said she, for the love of you I will perform it; and taking a sword she accordingly did it; so they dragged him to the gallows and hanged him up; after which she demanded the sheriff to fulfil his promise; but he replied, O thou wickedest of women; how couldest thou be so cruel to the dead body of thy husband? Therefore I will keep my word, and not marry whilst you live; and with that drew his sword and slew her. — Then, said the master, you have understood what I related? To which he replied, Full well, and am of opinion she was the worst of women. Therefore, for the words of a woman my son shall not die.

CHAP. XI.

The Prince's Complaint of the empress.

THE seventh day the masters brought the prince to the em-

peror who said, Hail royal Father, heaven can witness the falsity of the accusations laid against me ; for instead of my having attempted the chastity of the empress, it was she that tempted me to lewdness with her, which I refused ; and because I would not speak (the planets having threatened my life, if in seven days I spoke one word) she fell into a rage, and accused me : Nor is she so nice in her honour, for under the cover of a female garment, she keeps a youth to supply your place ; and send but for her attendants and I will make it appear. At this the emperor ordered them all to be called in, and the person the prince pitched on proved to be a man, who confessed he had lain with the empress several times. This so enraged the emperor, that he cast them both into prison ; and the prince told the following story. — In Palestine lived a knight who had one son, whom he held in great esteem, and for his noble accomplishments, caused him to be taught all the arts and sciences : in which

father being perfected, he sent for him
 home; and as he sat at dinner, a
 nightingale sung sweetly at which
 the knight said Ah! how sweet a song
 is this, could any one interpret it.—
 Then, said the youth, the bird in
 her song expressed that I should be a
 great lord, and that my father should
 hold the water, and my mother a
 towel to wash my hands. Where-
 upon the father growing angry, took
 him up, and running to the sea cast
 him in, when he swam to an unin-
 habited island, staying there fourdays,
 till a ship passing by took him up and
 sold him to a duke in Egypt, who
 finding him wise, made him ruler of
 his house. It happend the king of
 that country was troubled with the
 cry of three ravens, and demanded of
 the wise men the cause, but they could
 not resolve him; therefore he pro-
 claimed, that if any could tell the
 cause, he should have his daughter to
 wife, and the kingdom after his de-
 cease. Upon this Alexander, the
 youth's name, went to the king, say-
 ing That the ravens were the two old

ones and their young one, the male declaring that it was his right; seeing he had fed him, in the time of famine, when the female flew into a far country to shift for herself, and left him to perish; when on the other side, the female alledged she had taken pains in laying the eggs and brooding it, and therefore the young one belonged to her. And now, O king, said Alexander, they come to you to decide the controversy; give judgment then, and the ravens shall trouble you no more.— Then replied the king, it seems good to me, that the young one abide with the male; and on his saying this, the ravens took wing, and returned no more. The king thus delivered, confirmed his promise, advanced Alexander to places of dignity. Alexander travelled to Rome, and there became carver to Titus, whose daughter became in love with him, but his heart being in Egypt, Lodowick was sent in his stead, and Alexander sailed into Egypt; but Guido discovering the intrigues of Lodowick, and

male
see. the emperor's daughter, sent him a
e of challenge, who engaged Alexander,
to a but he being to celebrate his nup-
and tials, sent Lodowick to celebrate them
the in his place, on condition that he
she would not risk the princess of her
eggs virginity.

he Alexander arrives at court, the em-
nd peror supposing him to be Lodowick,
ey rejoiced, and the list being ready, the
o- combatants entered, and after a fierce
ne fight, Alexander cut off his foe's head,
— and sent it to the princess. The em-
d peror highly extolled him ; but he
h saying his father was sick, took his
e leave, and went back to Egypt. —
Some time after, Alexander was
made king of that country, and visit-
ing his father and mother, one day
before dinner, according to the inter-
pretation he had given of the bird's
language, his father brought the ba-
son and his mother the towel, but he
refused to let them hold either, com-
manding his servants to do it. Din-
ner ended, he asked them how many
children they had ? they said none.
Had you never any ? said the king.

Alas ! said the father, I once had a son, but he is dead. Did he die a natural or unnatural death ? A natural death, said the father. Well, look you to it, replied the king, for if I find it otherwise, you must expect no mercy. Then they fell upon their knees, and confessed the whole matter ; when the king mildly raising them from the ground, he discovered himself to them.

Upon hearing this story, the emperor resigned the government to his son Dioclesian, who demanded justice on the empress and her paramour ; the former being burnt, and the other hanged and quartered. And the emperor dying soon after, left his son in full possession of the empire.

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